

Part II Centennial Priority Projects

Centennial Handbook



*If you're going to go for the gold, it's
important to set your priorities.*

What Your Field Station Can Do

In addition to the eleven national priority projects, here are some examples of what your station can do now to join in the Refuge System Centennial efforts.

- Support your Regional Centennial Team through participation, communication and coordination.
- Establish a Centennial representative at your field station.
- Promote, support and assist a refuge special event by:
 - issuing a news release.
 - using the Centennial closing in your news release (see media section).
- Commemorate Pelican Island by investing in a boardwalk plank or flag.
- Buy a time capsule and host an event.
- Produce rack cards for your field station.
- Meet visitor services minimum requirements, i.e. entrance sign.
- Serve as ambassadors at conferences—host a field trip to your refuge or hatchery.
- Promote and participate in the call for photos for the 2003 calendar.
- Contribute an article for the special Centennial edition of the “Fish and Wildlife News.”
- Take advantage of AZA/Smithsonian partnership projects by partnering with local zoos and museums.
- Involve your Friends Group, volunteers and Cooperating Associations in the Centennial celebrations.
- Host a Congressional visit.
- Participate in major outreach events, e.g. Earth Day, IMBD, National Fishing and Boating Week, etc.
- Pursue a state or city proclamation (see proclamation section).
- List your event in the Service’s Special Event Database.
- Support Centennial theme in speeches or talks.
- Tailor and place movie trailers about the Refuge System in your local theaters.
- Sell Centennial products at your bookstore through your Friends and Cooperating Associations.

Visitor Services Initiative

Putting Out the Welcome Mat

One of the best ways to increase awareness of and support for the National Wildlife Refuge System is to ensure that visitors have a positive, meaningful experience with they visit a refuge open to the public. People visit many refuges across the country and have wonderful experiences. Ensuring positive first impressions of a refuge and the Refuge System is very important, since these first impressions play a big part in forming the public's image of our agency. The Centennial provides an opportunity to refocus our efforts to provide visitors positive memorable experiences.

What Will Happen Nationally by 2003?

By 2003 the National Wildlife Refuge Outreach Team hopes to have accomplished the following:

- A national refuge web site designed to be useful to a diversity of audiences—including visitors
- A new Refuge Visitors Guide brochure that is designed for visitors
- A 1-800-WILD telephone system that will connect to a live person who will mail the information that callers request
- Coordination of accurate refuge visitor information at the Washington level for the publishers of travel guidebooks

What Will Happen At Field Stations by 2003?

The following actions will insure that visitors' basic needs are provided for. By 2003 all refuges will be welcoming, safe and accessible. these action items are excerpts for the Visitor Services Requirements Handbook, requirement #2: "Welcome and Orient Visitors." **By 2003 each refuge is asked to meet them.**

Visitor Information

Provide visitors with clear information so they can easily determine where they can go, what they can do, and how they may safely and ethically engage in recreational and educational activities appropriate at each refuge. Every effort should be made to provide appropriate information so that visitors can guide themselves through the refuge without the need to search out refuge staff to answer questions or give directions.

Entrance Signs

- All entrance signs are well-maintained, properly located and in accordance with the *Service Sign Handbook* or current Director's Orders. If the field station does not currently have standard entrance signs at all entrances, they will be installed by 2003.
- All refuges will install the "Welcome to *Your* National Wildlife Refuge System" sign.

Kiosks/Information Stations

- Visitors should have access to the appropriate welcoming and orienting information placed in appropriate locations. This information should be up-to-date and should help visitors understand what they can do at that refuge and where they can do it. Kiosks or similar structures are often used to meet this need.
- This information is available to visitors after-hours.
- The kiosks are universally accessible.

Directional Signs

- Directional signs within the refuge are clear and logically located to provide visitors adequate time to make decisions while driving, hiking, biking, skiing, etc. They clearly indicate proper direction to help visitors

get to their destinations on the refuge.

- The signs are produced per the *Service Sign Handbook*.
- Off the refuge, there are signs along highways and roads directing visitors to the refuge from the local communities, main roads or interstate highways.

Boundary Signs

- The refuge boundaries are properly marked, and the boundary signs are maintained. Assure that the use of the various boundary signs, open and closed area signs, etc. is appropriate and correct.

Regulatory Information

Clear, positively worded regulations enhance the visitor's understanding of what they can do on a refuge and create a more relaxed, enjoyable experience. For example, rules are more apt to be followed when visitors are given a reason for the rule (i.e., "Litter can harm fish and wildlife. Please pack your trash.")

- Visitor regulations are noted in the general leaflets, secondary activity leaflets, at the kiosks or at other appropriate locations. They should be simple, easy to understand and worded in a positive manner.
- It is clear where visitors can go, or who they can contact, to ask regulatory questions or to report problems.

General Leaflet

- The general leaflet is produced per the *Service Graphics Standards*. Information contained in general leaflets may include the following: 1) welcome and orienting information, 2) basic refuge background and management information, 3) basic regulations, 4) information

regarding allowed public use activities, 5) refuge contact information, 6) a refuge map with public use facilities noted, and 7) accessible programs and facilities information.

Internet Web Sites

- Refuge web sites are up-to-date and useful to a diversity of audiences.

Visitor Facilities

Facilities are a positive reflection on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Facility maintenance

- All visitor facilities, including rest rooms, are high-quality, accessible, clean, and properly maintained.

Roads and Parking

- All public roads are well-maintained and properly marked with directional traffic control signs.
- When roads are not all-weather roads, this is indicated in the general leaflet and the kiosk signs.
- Parking lots are appropriately located for the appropriate public use and recreation activities, and they are properly sized and oriented.
- Accessible parking is provided at sites where there are accessible facilities.

Refuge Passport Book

- Refuges with Cooperative Associations sales areas should offer Refuge Passport Books.

Service Logo

- The Service logo is prominently displayed on Service buildings, vehicles, etc.

Visitor Hours

- Refuge visitor and headquarters hours are posted on the welcoming and orienting kiosk sign, at the headquarters, at the information center, and communicated on phone messages.
- The contact station is open during peak visitation, such as weekends, or in some cases, evenings or other anticipated periods of high public use. The refuge staff has explored the use of volunteers to allow for extended hours.

Customer Service

Excellent customer service and quality first-impressions are key to visitors feeling welcome and safe at National Wildlife Refuges. Visitors will be treated with courtesy and in a professional manner.

- The public will reach a "live body" via the telephone during normal business hours. If not, the telephone answering system is "friendly" (does not have a long tree of options) so that visitors know how to leave messages (quickly into the tree of options) if a "live body" is not available.
- Phone calls are returned within one working day of their receipt (except weekends and holidays).
- The station phone message provides information on current public use activities, wildlife spectacles and special events as an option that may or may not be chosen.
- The staff wears Service uniforms with nametags and maintains a neat, professional appearance (complete uniform components).
- The staff maintains a professional courteous manner.